

D-185  
Dorchester County Jail  
500 Court Lane, Cambridge  
Public; National Register

Circa 1882

The Dorchester County Jail is a fine masonry Romanesque revival style building with two intersecting rectangular wings, each under a hip roof. There is a cupola with a finial over both the front and rear portions and a circular tower on the northeast corner. The second-story windows on the rear portion are tall and narrow-proportioned under rounded brick arches. Beltcourses of brick and terra cotta ornament the exterior walls and contrast crisply with the stonework. The building has a dentiled cornice, embellished by brackets around the front portion. There is a small one-story brick addition to the west facade in front of the Jail.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. D-185

Magi No.

DOE \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Dorchester County Jail

## 2. Location

street & number Court Lane \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Cambridge \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Dorchester

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	___ not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. liber

street & number folio

city, town state

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. D-185

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The front facade of the jail faces Court Lane to the northwest. The jail is a two-story, three-bay stone building with an adjoining four-bay cell block at the rear. There is a round tower topped by a hemispherical roof located at the east corner of the cell block; a round chimney projects from the surface of the rear wall of the cell block. Each main section of the building is topped by a pyramidal slate roof and cupola.

Exterior finish consists of coursed granite ornamented with horizontal bands of terra cotta tile, white stone window lintels in the main block, and round brick arches above the windows in the cell block. The stone mortar joints throughout have been ornamented with terra-cotta-colored pencil joints applied over the original gray-white mortar joints. The original front facade, embellished with a slightly projecting center bay topped by a pedimented cross gable, has been partially obscured by the addition of a mid-twentieth century cinder block addition. The bracketed cornice which caps the main block is still visible above the modern addition.

The interior of the main block was heavily altered in 1934 and subsequent years; consequently, very little original interior finish remains. The cell block; which was also heavily altered in 1934, currently consists of two floors fitted with ten cells on each floor. Each cell, measuring approximately 6' by 7', is furnished with two bunks hung from the wall, a toilet, and a sink. Three parallel corridors which run the length of the cell block provide access to each cell as well as to plumbing apparatus and a rear passageway. The jail is currently vacant and is slated for demolition.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. D-185

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Dorchester County Jail, a prominent Cambridge landmark, is one of the few stone buildings on the Eastern Shore and has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Built in 1883, the jail was designed by Charles L. Carson of Baltimore in a Renaissance-Revival style. In 1934, the original interior was removed and a new reinforced concrete interior was inserted. Some time during the 1950s, a cinder-block one story interior addition was added.

(See Maryland Threatened Building Survey report - Threatened Resources Documented In Maryland, 1991-92, prepared by Lanier et al, dated July 1992. HABS No. not assigned.)



## MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Dorchester County Jail

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

500 Court Lane

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Dorchester

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER Jail**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dorchester County Courthouse

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET &amp; NUMBER

206 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Maryland

21613

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION****CONDITION**

☐ EXCELLENT  
☒ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

**CHECK ONE**

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

**CHECK ONE**

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Dorchester County Jail, built in 1882, is a Romanesque Revival style building of masonry construction. It consists of two intersecting rectangular wings, each under a hip roof. There is a cupola with a finial over both the front and rear portions. On the northeast corner of the building is a circular tower. The second story windows on the rear portion are tall narrow proportioned windows under rounded brick arches. Beltcourses of brick and terracotta ornament the exterior walls and contrast with the stonework. The building has a dentiled cornice, which is further embellished by brackets around the front portion. Added to the west facade on front of the jail is a small one story addition of brick and frame construction, built sometime in the 20th century. On the old part of the west facade, to the rear of this, is a center gable with a lunette window.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1882, the Dorchester County Jail is an example of Romanesque Revival style architecture.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY



**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Catherine L. Moore

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET &amp; NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Route 3, Box 32

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Cambridge

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

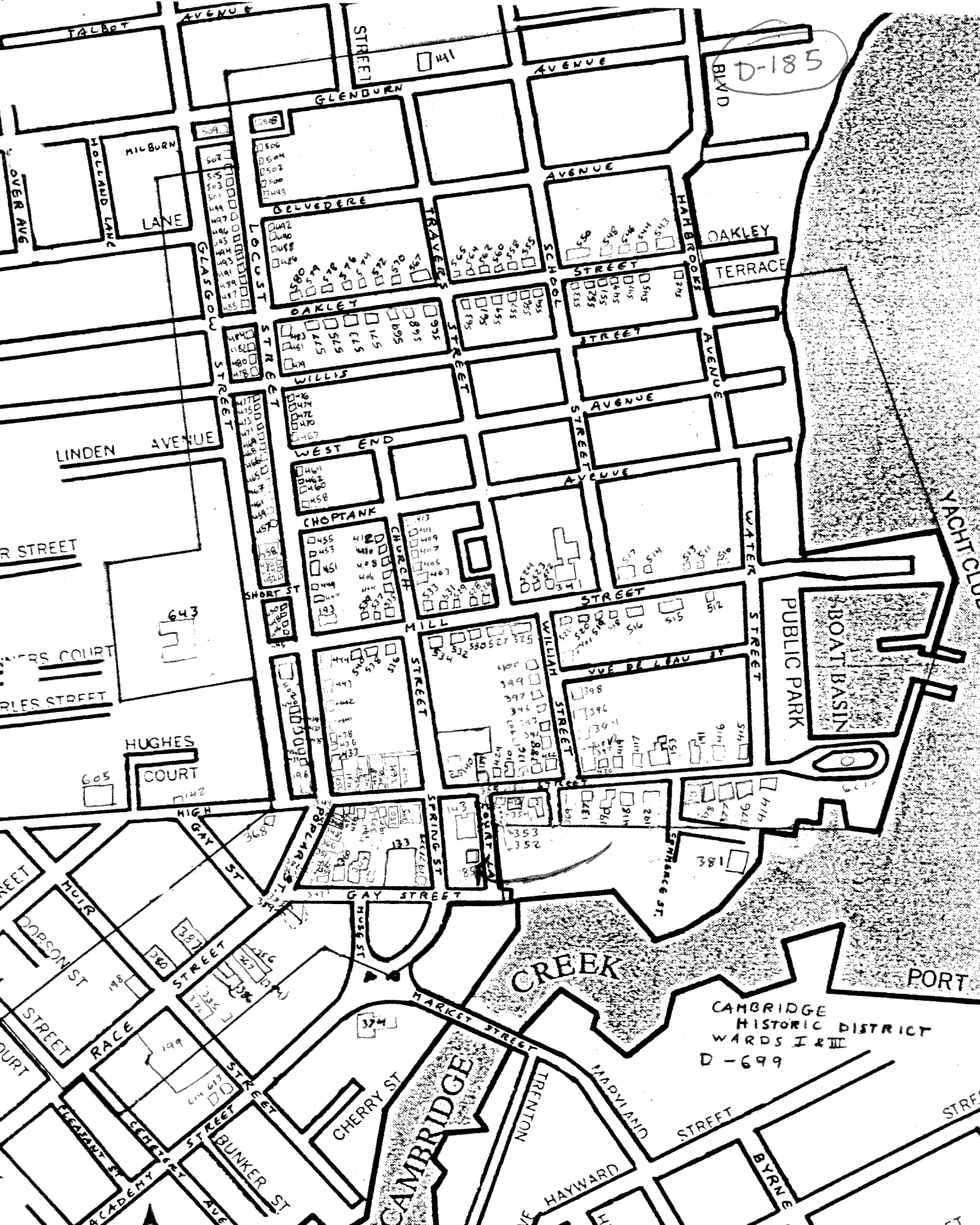
**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS**

DORCHESTER COUNTY JAIL  
COURT LANE  
CAMBRIDGE VICINITY  
DORCHESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

HABS No. MD-

Photographer: David Ames  
May 1992

- |     |     |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| MD- | -1  | PERSPECTIVE OF NORTH AND EAST SIDES LOOKING SOUTH.  |
| MD- | -2  | PERSPECTIVE OF SOUTH AND EAST SIDES LOOKING WEST.   |
| MD- | -3  | ELEVATION OF SOUTH WALL LOOKING NORTH.  |
| MD- | -4  | ELEVATION OF WEST WALL LOOKING NORTHEAST.   |
| MD- | -5  | DETAIL OF WEST WALL LOOKING NORTHEAST.  |
| MD- | -6  | FIRST FLOOR: VIEW ALONG WEST WALL LOOKING NORTHWEST SHOWING POSITION OF CELL BLOCK WITHIN BUILDING.                                       |
| MD- | -7  | FIRST FLOOR: VIEW ALONG NORTH WALL LOOKING NORTHEAST SHOWING RELATIONSHIP OF CELL BLOCK WALL TO EXTERIOR WALL AND ENTRANCE TO CELL BLOCK. |
| MD- | -8  | DETAIL OF TYPICAL CELL.   |
| MD- | -9  | SECOND FLOOR: VIEW ALONG WEST WALL OF CELL BLOCK LOOKING SOUTHEAST.   |
| MD- | -10 | DETAIL OF CELL WALL DRAWINGS.   |
| MD- | -11 | DETAIL OF CELL WALL DRAWINGS.   |



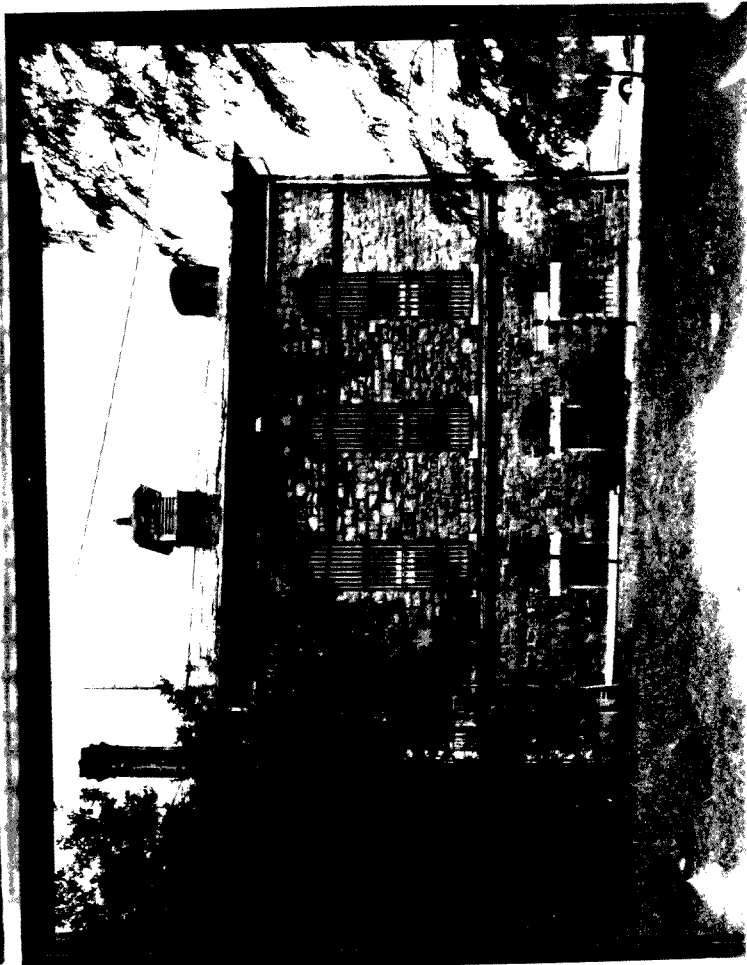
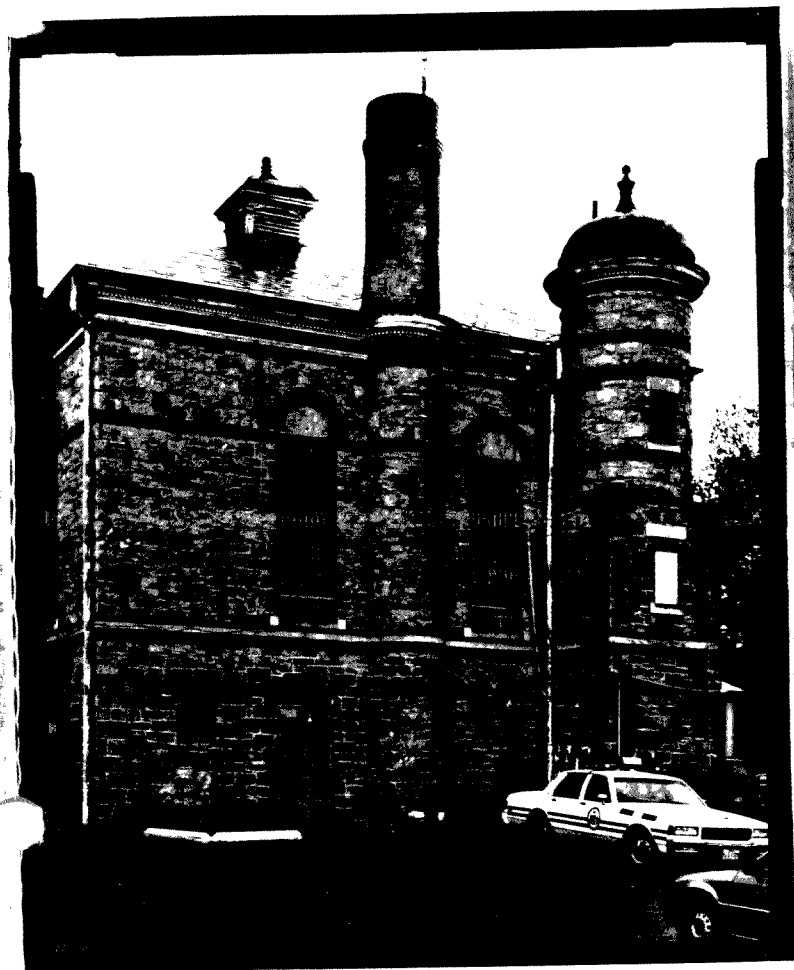
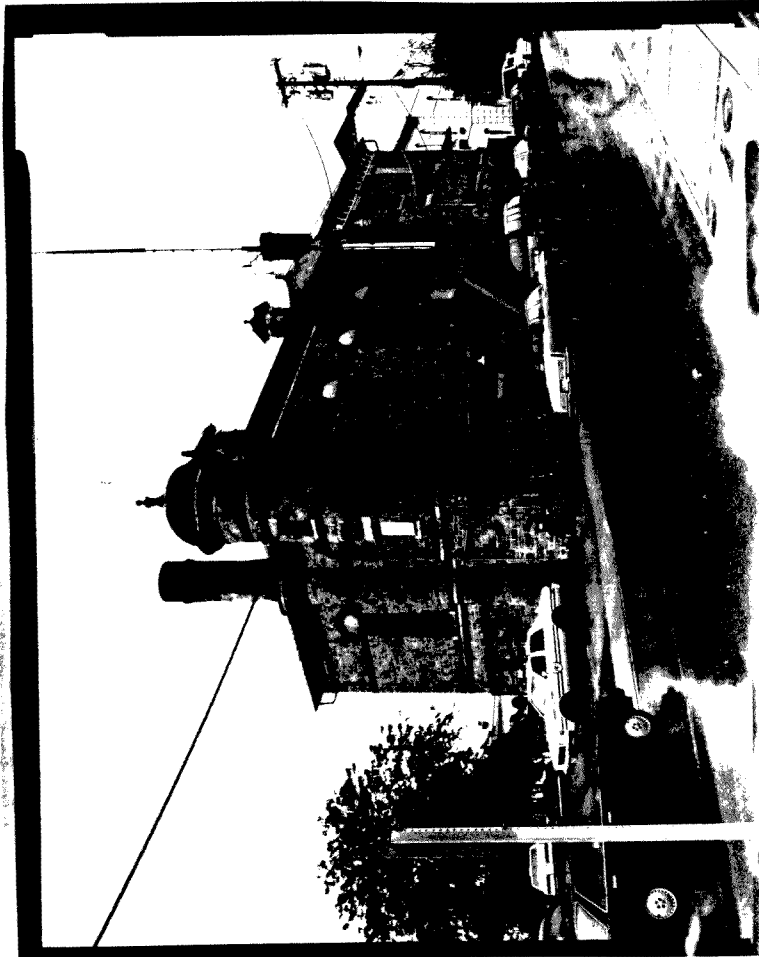
D-185

CAMBRIDGE  
HISTORIC DISTRICT  
WARDS I & III  
D-699

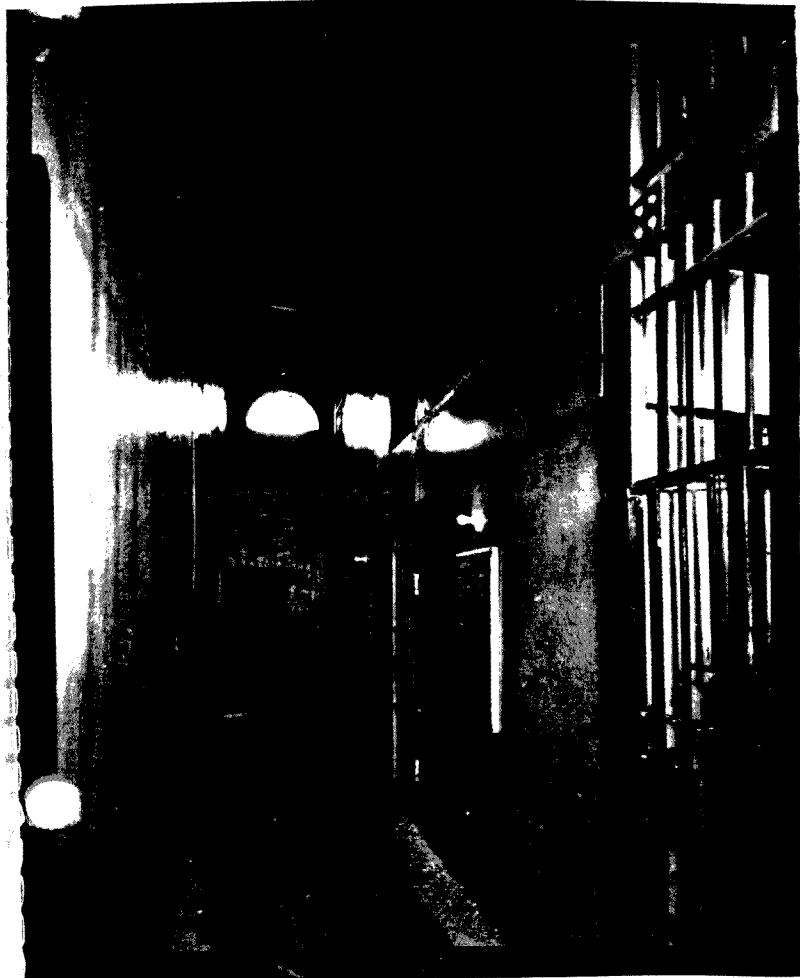
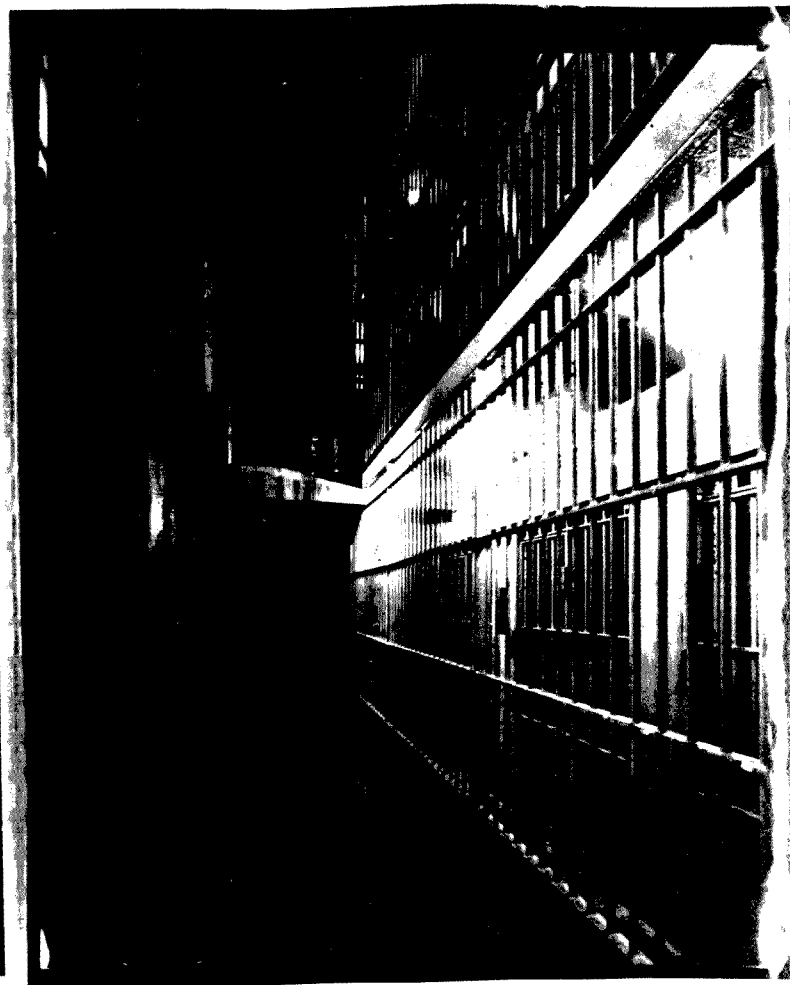
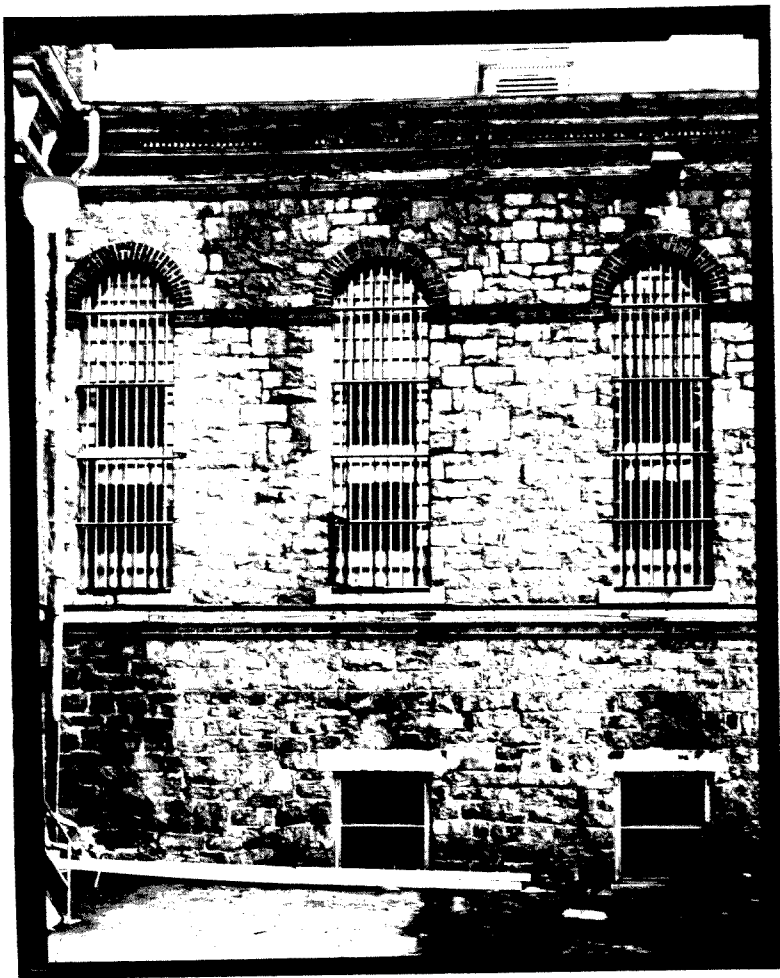
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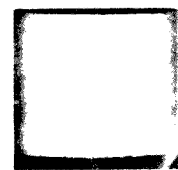
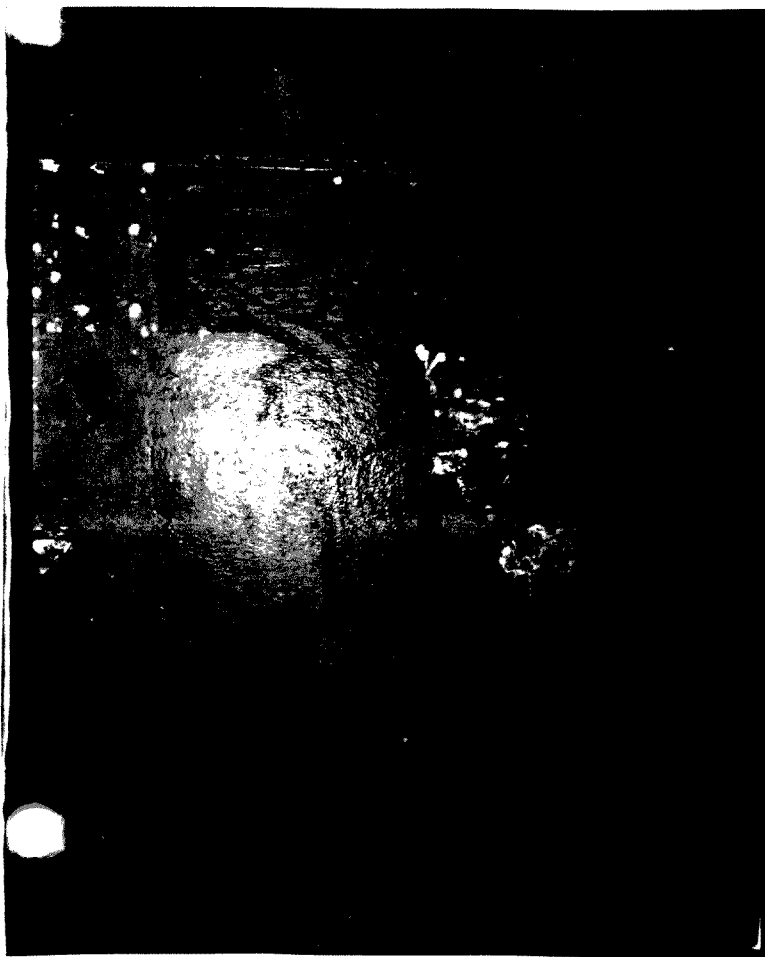
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VOLUME



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